

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

EB-07 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

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TAGS: EAIR, UR, US

SUBJECT: AEROFLOT THREATENS NEW TICKETING RESTRICTIONS AGAINST
PAN AM

REF: (A) STATE 288613, (B) STATE 261615

BEGIN SUMMARY: AEROFLOT IS THREATENING TO IMPOSE NEW RESTRICTIONS
ON SALES OF TICKETS AND RESERVATIONS FOR PAN AMERICAN ON DEC 6.
RESTRICTIONS WILL BE INTRODUCED UNLESS PANAM WITHDRAWS ITS
REQUIREMENTS, ALSO EFFECTIVE DEC. 6, THAT AEROFLOT TICKETS ISSUED
OUTSIDE THE U.S. FOR TRAVEL FROM THE U.S. MUST BE REVALIDATED
BY PANAM. INITIAL PANAM NEW YORK REACTION, NOT YET CONFIRMED, IS
TO STICK WITH STATED POSITION AND THREATEN TO SUSPEND FLIGHTS IF
AEROFLOT ACTIONS SEVERELY IMPEDE OPERATIONS HERE. END SUMMARY.

ACTION REQUESTED: THAT DEPARTMENT CALL IN SOVIETS TO EXPRESS
CONCERN OVER PROSPECT OF NEW MEASURES AGAINST PANAM.

1. PANAM REP DRAHORAD HAS INFORMED US THAT HE WAS CALLED TO
MEET WITH AEROFLOT COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR TIKHONOW AND OTHER AEROFLOT
OFFICIALS ON NOVEMBER 26. PURPOSE WAS TO RECEIVE A "STRONG
OBJECTION" TO PANAM'S ACTION REQUIRING THAT (A) ALL TICKETS SOLD
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IN THE U.S. FOR AEROFLOT SERVICES BE ISSUED AT TWO PANAM

LOCATIONS AND THAT (B) ALL AEROFLOT TICKETS ISSUED OUTSIDE U.S. FOR TRAVEL FROM THE U.S. BE REVALIDATED BY PANAM. TIKHONOW WAS PARTICULARLY INCENSED OVER THE LATTER PROVISION, WHICH HE CONTENDED WAS NOT STIPULATED IN THE CAB ORDER OF COT. 19 AND WAS ADDED BY PANAM ONLY TO BE NASTY AND FURTHER COMPLICATE THE SITUATION.

2. TIKHONOW SAID THAT IF PANAM DOES NOT WITHDRAW THESE REQUIREMENTS THE FOLLOWING COUNTERMEASURES WILL BE ORDERED, EFFECTIVE DEC. 6: (WRITTEN NOTIFICATION OF THESE ACTIONS TO PANAM MOSCOW, HE ADDED, IS PENDING RECEIPT OF A REPLY FROM PANAM).

(A) PANAM TICKETS WOULD BE ISSUED IN ONLY TWO LOCATIONS, BOTH IN MOSCOW, AT THE HOTEL UKRAINA AND THE INTERNATIONAL RESERVATION CENTER ON FRUNZENSKAYA NABEREZHNYA.

(B) AEROFLOT WILL REQUIRE REVALIDATION OF ALL PANAM TICKETS ISSUED OUTSIDE THE USSR FOR SERVICE FROM THE USSR. THIS MUST BE DONE IN PERSON AT EITHER SITE MENTIONED ABOVE.

(C) AEROFLOT WILL NOW BE FORCED TO CONTROL PANAM RESERVATIONS OUT OF MOSCOW BECAUSE AEROFLOT'S SERVICE FROM THE U.S. IS HANDLED BY THE PANAM RESERVATION COMPUTER. PANAM WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE AEROFLOT WITH ALL ADVANCE RESERVATION INFORMATION AND COPIES OF RESERVATION STATUS AND CONTROL MESSAGES. IF PANAM REFUSES TO COMPLY, AEROFLOT WOULD BE "UNABLE" TO CONFIRM ANY SPACE ON PANAM FLIGHTS FROM MOSCOW AND THUS COULD NOT REVALIDATE ANY TICKETS.

3. DRAHORAD EMPHASIZED TO TIKHONOW THAT ALL MEASURES TAKEN BY PANAM AGAINST AEROFLOT WERE TAKEN IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE CAB ORDER AND WERE NOT UNILATERAL. HE ALSO UNDERTOOK TO INFORM PANAM NEW YORK AND RECEIVE A REPLY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

4. DRAHORAD INFORMED EMBOFF THAT REVALIDATION REQUIREMENT FOR AEROFLOT TICKETS ISSUED OUTSIDE THE U.S. WAS TAKEN TO PREVENT AEROFLOT FROM NEUTRALIZING THE CAB ORDER BY INSTEAD ISSUING TICKETS FROM ABROAD ON SERVICE FROM THE U.S. HE IS ALSO CONCERNED

THAT IF THE RESTRICTIONS BECOME EFFECTIVE DEC. 6, HE MAY NOT BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ABLE TO REACH ALL PERSONS HOLDING PANAM TICKETS WHO WOULD THEN NEED TO REVALIDATE THEM BEFORE DEPARTURE.

5. PANAM NEW YORK HAS INDICATED, BUT NOT CONFIRMED, TO DRAHORAD THAT ITS RESPONSE WILL BE AS FOLLOWS. FIRST, IT WILL AFFIRM THAT ALL PANAM ACTIONS ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CAB ORDER. SECOND, IT WILL POINT OUT AEROFLOT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PANAM RESERVATION SYSTEM IS VOLUNTARY AND CAN BE DISCONTINUED AT ANYTIME. ALSO PANAM

MIGHT GIVE AEROFLOT "FREE SALE" OF ANY PANAM SEATS FROM MOSCOW SO AS TO MAKE UNNECESSARY THE REVALIDATION NEED. THIRD, IF AEROFLOT TAKES THE STEPS OUTLINED AND THE RESULT IS THAT PANAM PASSENGERS ARE DETAINED AND TICKETS ARE NOT REVALIDATED, PANAM WOULD BE PREPARED TO SUSPEND SERVICE. IN THIS CASE IT WOULD SEEK SUSPENSION OF AEROFLOT SERVICE AS WELL.

6. COMMENT: DRAHORAD APPEARS CONCERNED THAT AEROFLOT INTENDS TO USE THE TICKET REVALIDATION PROCEDURE TO RETARD SEVERELY PANAM'S OPERATIONS HERE. DRAHORAD HAS PROMISED TO PROVIDE EMBASSY WITH A COPY OF PANAM'S FORMAL RESPONSE TO AEROFLOT. IRRESPECTIVE OF FINAL CONTENT OF THAT REPLY EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT SOVIETS SHOULD BE REMINDED THAT AEROFLOT SERVICE TO U.S. IS CONTINGENT ON PANAM'S CONTINUED OPERATIONS HERE. CAB ACTIONS WERE A LEGITIMATE RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS AEROFLOT TICKETING RESTRICTIONS AND THE NEW STEPS, IF ENACTED, THREATEN THE WHOLE CIVAIR RELATIONSHIP. THIS IS HARDLY THE "CONSTRUCTIVE BASIS" FOR TALKS IN DECEMBER OR JANUARY REFERRED TO IN THE SOVIET ORAL MESSAGE ON US-USSR CIVAIR RELATIONS DELIVERED NOV. 24, REFTEL A. IT STRIKES US, HOWEVER, AS PART OF A NOT UNFAMILIAR SOVIET NEGOTIATING PLOY OF OFFERING TO NEGOTIATE EVEN WHILE INCREASING PRESSURE BY EXACERBATING EXISTING STRAINS.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT DEPARTMENT INFORM SOVIETS BY DEC. 3 THAT WE UNDERSTAND NEW MEASURES MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST PANAM, ON THE EVE OF THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS. NOT ONLY WOULD THIS BE AN UNHELPFUL PRELUDE TO THE NEGOTIATIONS, IT COULD SET IN LINE A CHAIN OF EVENTS WHOSE OUTCOME CANNOT BE PREDICTED.

8. IF DEPT HAS NO OBJECTION, EMBASSY WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEEK APPOINTMENT EARLY NEXT WEEK AT MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION TO DISCUSS CURRENT SITUATION AND EXPLORE SOVIET INTENTIONS REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS.

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